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Rex Murphy: Why don't the Liberals just declare the Trans Mountain charade over?

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Body

Were you to suppose that the purpose of current national energy policy was to chase Alberta out of Confederation (with a big knotty stick), you would have hit up a dismayingly plausible, perhaps the only plausible, explanation for the remorseless stream of blunders, stumbles, harassments, blockades, protests and court rulings that have constituted said "policy" over recent years.

Certainly more plausible than anything that has escaped the lips of Justin Trudeau recently, anything to be found in the endless tweets of ***climate*** crusader Catherine McKenna over the past four years, or in the vapid pronunciamentos, post-Trans Mountain appeals case, of Minister Sohi in the past four days.

We have a government that gets passionate about "single-use" plastics, but is comatose on the cardinal industry of a First-World democracy.

The government has scotched every pipeline, proposed or considered, East or West, with the dispatch and efficiency of the better assassins (i.e., unlike the "hitchhiker" would-be assassin someone took to India). It has super-glued the one pipeline it has vaguely signalled it favours to a trial by combat against triumphalist environmentalism, a labyrinth of judicial reviews, hearings, morbid consultation-itis, jimmied-up protests, useless carbon taxes, the Fata Morgana of social licence, and endless water-torture excruciations of the famed "review process."

And where are we now? The Trans Mountain pipeline - which is merely a twin or extension of one in the ground for 70 full years without British Columbia being blasted into the Pacific, Canada exploding, or the whole world hyper-heating into global-warming oblivion - that innocuous pipeline, which has been on regulatory death row for over seven years, has been stalled, yet again. There are nuclear programs in rogue states that get less attention and oversight, certainly less vetting, than this one Canadian pipeline.

The biggest horror of this latest kick in the teeth to the oil industry, this gazillionth suspension and delay, is that the government of our Canada didn't even so much as show up to watch the proceedings. It didn't intervene. It didn't submit arguments. It wasn't even there as a casual bystander.

For the already-disgraced SNC-Lavalin, the Trudeau government (or the government of Quebec and Ontario, as on this issue it must be called) was willing to turn the Earth around: violate ethics codes; call in the PMO's top guns, the clerk of the Privy Council, other ministers and their aides to pressure and harass the attorney general; send out invitations to former Supreme Court judges to offer "advice;" tailor bespoke legislation; risk a full storm of scandal over disregard for the rule of law; and turn its back on its two strongest feminist ministers, tossing them out of caucus. All to spare one Quebec company, already tarnished.

The Trudeau government of Ontario and Quebec went to the mat for SNC; it went under the mat, and if there had been another mat, it would have gone under that one, too.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau waits to speak about Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion's report that he breached ethics rules by trying to influence a corporate legal case regarding SNC-Lavalin, at a press conference in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., on Aug. 14, 2019.

Now contrast. For court cases concerning its own decision to approve Trans Mountain, the government wasn't even there. It stayed completely out of it. It gave the judicial field over entirely to its opponents. Its absence and indifference startled even the judge!

Farce we understand. It's just extreme foolishness. But this saga of the single pipeline left on the agenda descends or ascends to rare surrealism, to inexplicability itself. What is this all this about?

If the government wants to shut down the oil and gas industry - which its every action and every inaction indicates that it does - then shut it down. Stop this pantomime that must be driving every Albertan wild with frustration and way past anger. Do it. If saving the planet from ***climate doom*** is your one primary goal and ambition - act it. Declare the damn charade over. You don't want Alberta energy to have access to the world market because that would strengthen the Alberta energy industry. And by your logic, a strong energy industry in Canada would damn the planet, tick off Quebec, and offend the World Wildlife Fund, its past president Gerry Butts, Tides, the Greens, Neil Young, and naturally Greta Thunberg.

Better to strand an industry, alienate a whole province, leave tens of thousands of jobs vacant, than risk a stern look from the new Joan of Arc.

Were you an unemployed pipefitter in Red Deer, an unemployed mechanic in Weyburn, a supplier in Calgary, or an idle crane operator now back home in Newfoundland, watching all this, you would be asking the question: What are they at? Do we, who work by the thousands in this industry, have any standing at all? Or are we just "extras" in Mr. Trudeau's - "There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada" - new Confederation movie?

Were energy in Ontario, pipelines would be talismans. There would be a halo of neon pipelines around the CN Tower. The famed Toronto sign would be fashioned out of rainbow-coloured pipelines. John Tory would go to city hall wearing an "I Heart Pipelines" T-shirt. The basketball team would be the Toronto Pipelines. It would be a civil offence to stand within 15 metres of a pipeline - unless you were offering a prayer to steel cylinders, hollow tubes and the gods of lower viscosity.

Pipeline supporters rally against Bill C69 in Calgary on April 9, 2019.

But energy, viewed from Ottawa, is a hinterland industry. Energy is mainly Alberta, the West, Newfoundland - far inland or far offshore. So gauche. So rustic. So ... oily.

There is one fact that cannot be walked away from in this latest stall on Trans Mountain: the government didn't even show up in the courtroom. That's the measure of how much it cares. And were I in Alberta, on this issue, I would declare Canada has a two-tier government. One for the connected in central Canada. And one far less engaged, far less aware, or concerned, for anything outside that dubious Eden.

I presume this will be an issue in the two debates in central Canada. Right after Andrew Scheer's "secret agenda" on abortion, and the ban on plastic straws, would be my guess.

Rex Murphy: In the wake of SNC-Lavalin, should Trudeau be lecturing about the law?(*https://nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-in-the-wake-of-snc-lavalin-should-trudeau-be-lecturing-about-the-law*)

Rex Murphy: Who else would have the empathy to interrogate our feminist PM?(*https://nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-who-else-would-have-the-empathy-to-interrogate-our-feminist-pm*)

Rex Murphy: I accept and I disagree: Justin Trudeau's amazing doublespeak(https://nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-i-accept-and-i-disagree-justin-trudeaus-amazing-doublespeak) !@COPYRIGHT=© 2019 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

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